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EXCISE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: August 18, 1961

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *Mr. Hunt* DATE *2/24/86*

REASON(S) _____
CLASSIFICATION MARKINGS ☐
UNCLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE ☐
RELEASE DURING 1A *part*
FA or FOI EXEMPTIONS *(11)*

SUBJECT: Berlin

PARTICIPANTS: Minister Ferrero-Capano, Italian Embassy
Mr. L. Dean Brown, WE
Mr. August Velletri, WE

COPIES TO: EUR - (2)
WE - Mr. Brown
WE - (3-see)
GER
INR - 8

American Embassy, Rome
American Embassy, Bonn

AUG 30 1961

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Mr. Brown gave Minister Ferrero-Capano a brief summary of the latest developments in the Berlin crisis mentioning the fact that the German Democratic Republic had greatly reduced the number of crossing points between East and West Germany and that there had been some harassing of U.S. military. Mr. Brown touched upon the motives behind the Soviet action in sealing off East Berlin and indicated that the Russians not only wished to bolster GDR's internal position but had sought to strengthen their own bargaining power. While the Soviet show of force may have been planned for some time, the timing seemed to have been influenced by the mass exodus of East German refugees. The U.S., Mr. Brown continued, viewed the Soviet measures with serious concern because of the possibility of new incidents. Moreover, having assumed increased authority there was the danger that East Germany might act irresponsibly.

It had been agreed that the most effective way to bolster the morale of West Berlin would be to strengthen the military garrison and to have Vice President Johnson visit the city.

The Working Group had also considered the possibility of taking the matter to the UN on the grounds that the Soviet measures violated human rights and constituted a threat to peace. But it seemed doubtful that enough nations would consider the sealing off of East Berlin borders a "serious threat to peace". Nevertheless, Mr. Brown said, it was our thinking that the Soviet action should be exploited to the fullest through a stepped-up world wide program of information and propaganda.

In response to a question, Mr. Brown said that the Working Group was preparing an answer to the Aide-Memoire of August 3 and that the answer might also deal with the

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the subject of negotiations.

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Our immediate problem, Mr. Brown said, was to make sure that public opinion understood the basic threat underlining the Soviet action and that the Western Alliance was in agreement on the steps to be taken in meeting the Soviet challenge. In this connection, Mr. Brown said that the U.S. would submit some definite proposals on countermeasures at the August 21 NATO Council Meeting.

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